**A** **BILL**

TO AMEND SECTION 59‑18‑310(B)(2) OF THE 1976 CODE, RELATING TO ACADEMIC STANDARDS AND ASSESSMENTS, TO PROVIDE A TWO YEAR EXTENSION FOR HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA PETITIONS FOR A PERSON WHO IS NO LONGER ENROLLED IN A PUBLIC SCHOOL AND WHO PREVIOUSLY FAILED TO RECEIVE A HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA OR WAS DENIED GRADUATION SOLELY FOR FAILING TO MEET THE EXIT EXAM REQUIREMENTS.

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of South Carolina:

SECTION 1. Section 59‑18‑310(B)(2) of the 1976 Code is amended to read:

“(B)(2) A person who is no longer enrolled in a public school and who previously failed to receive a high school diploma or was denied graduation solely for failing to meet the exit exam requirements pursuant to this section and State Regulation may petition the local school board to determine the student’s eligibility to receive a high school diploma pursuant to this chapter. The local school board will transmit diploma requests to the South Carolina Department of Education in accordance with department procedures. Petitions under this section must be submitted to the local school district by ~~December 31, 2015~~ December 31, 2017. Students receiving diplomas in accordance with this section shall not be counted as graduates in the graduation rate calculations for affected schools and districts, either retroactively or in current or future calculations. On or before ~~January 31, 2017~~ January 31, 2019, the South Carolina Department of Education shall report to the State Board of Education and the General Assembly the number of diplomas granted, by school district, under the provision. The State Board of Education shall remove any conflicting requirement and promulgate conforming changes in its applicable regulations. The department shall advertise the provisions of this item in at least one daily newspaper of general circulation in the area of each school district within forty‑five days after this enactment. At a minimum, this notice must consist of two columns measuring at least ten inches in length and measuring at least four and one‑half inches combined width, and include:

(a) a headline printed in at least a twenty‑four point font that is boldfaced;

(b) an explanation of who qualifies for the petitioning option;

(c) an explanation of the petition process;

(d) a contact name and phone number; and

(e) the deadline for submitting a petition.”

SECTION 2. This act takes effect upon approval by the Governor.

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